

SPRING IN THE HEBRIDES

AN EXPEDITION EXPLORING THE MAJESTIC HEBRIDES
ABOARD THE MS HEBRIDEAN SKY

24TH TO 31ST MAY 2022



NOBLE CALEDONIA

You can travel the world visiting all manner of exotic and wonderful places without realising that some of the finest scenery, fascinating history and most endearing people may be close to home. Nowhere is this truer than around Scotland's magnificent coastline, an indented landscape of enormous natural splendour with offshore islands forming stepping stones into the Atlantic. During this seven night expedition aboard the 118 passenger MS Hebridean Sky we will explore the spectacular beauty, rich wildlife and fascinating history of the Inner and Outer Hebrides and with our fleet of Zodiacs we will be able to visit some of the most remote and uninhabited islands including the Shiant Islands, Lunga and St Kilda, as well as the small island community of Iona.



This is not a cruise in the conventional sense, more an exploration with like-minded companions to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the islands. Learn something of their history, see the abundant bird and marine life, but above all revel in the timeless enchantment that these islands exude to all those who appreciate the natural world. There is no better way to explore this endlessly fascinating and beautiful region than by small ship, and ashore with our local experts we divide into small groups thereby enjoying a more comprehensive and peaceful experience. Having arranged hundreds of small ship cruises around Scotland, we have learned that everyone takes something different from the experience. We are indeed fortunate in having such marvellous places so close to home. Now more than ever there is a great appreciation for the peace, beauty and culture of this special corner of the UK.



Loch Scavaig



Harbour seal

What to Expect

Flexibility is the key to an expedition cruise; sometimes the whole day's schedule may be changed to maximise your experience based on weather or wildlife sightings, something that would not be possible on a large cruise ship. Each day holds something new and below are some extracts from our vessel's logs from previous voyages which will provide you with an insight into what you can expect from this Hebridean adventure:

Canna: The first Zodiac group went ashore at 8.30am and there were three activities offered this morning. Firstly, local guides from the Scottish National Trust led groups on a walk from the landing site along the road past an early twentieth-century stone church, the shop, the post office and the oldest inhabited house on the island. At this point each group in their turn left the road to walk over the fields to see an ancient Christian stone cross and also the Punishment Stone. Many legends are attached to both and no one is quite sure of their complete history. In the past as many as 500 people lived on the island whereas today there are just 16 people who live all year round on Canna. The path continued through woodland past two long-eared owl chicks on a tree and around the back of Canna House, home of the Gaelic folklorist John Lorne Campbell who owned the island before giving it to the Trust. A different option this morning was a shorter walk along the road and then an opportunity to hear Gaelic songs and stories with a local inhabitant. The third option was simply to wander and enjoy the beautiful countryside in the sunshine. Eider ducks were calling their haunting "oooh, oooh" calls across the bay and a wide variety of birds were spotted including cuckoo, warblers, and skylarks. There was also an opportunity to visit the local shop which is run on an honesty box basis by the local inhabitants - and to buy a cup of self-service tea or coffee and sit in the sunshine. We were all back on board the ship by midday and we set sail for our next destination.

St Kilda & Stac Lee: We sailed through the night and dropped anchor in Village Bay opposite Hirta at 7.00am. Sue, the resident warden, came on board to give us an introduction to the islands and some pointers of what to see. On reaching shore, Hannah and Daniel led guided walks through the main buildings and along The Street, pausing periodically to add other pieces of information. Upon reaching the cemetery and Iron Age souterrain people wandered at will, some with Clive up to the quarry, some to the Gap with Scott overlooking Boreray and some to the gift shop for a little retail therapy. The wind was coming onto the cliffs at The Gap, which meant the fulmars were having an absolutely roaring time floating on the gusts. They seemed to be suspended in mid-air right in front of us as we stood at the edge of these wonderful 800 foot sheer cliffs. Back in the village, many people managed to see and photograph the St Kilda wren, an endemic sub-species. At 13:00 we headed back to the ship for lunch after which we had a ship cruise in Glen Bay checking out the spectacular coastal scenery and sea birds on the ship's outer decks. Amazing views were all around us as we soaked in the atmosphere of the bay. But the day was not finished. The captain heaved anchor and sailed the short distance to nearby Boreray and the stacs which are home to the largest colony of Northern gannets. We circumnavigated Stac Lee, enabling us to appreciate the magnificence and magnitude of this gannet colony out here in the Atlantic.





Iona



Exploring by Zodiac



Callanish Standing Stones

The Itinerary

Day 1 Oban, Scotland.

Embark the MS Hebridean Sky this afternoon. Transfers will be provided from Glasgow International Airport and Glasgow Central Railway Station at a fixed time.

Day 2 Canna & Loch Scavaig.

Strategically placed between the mountains of Rum and the Outer Hebrides, the island of Canna and its adjoining neighbour Sanday are bound together like some rare text that reveals over 60 million years of Hebridean geology and history. They have an amazingly rich archaeological landscape with remains dating to all periods of settled occupation in Scotland. Canna is run as a single farm and bird sanctuary by the National Trust for Scotland and enjoys the best harbour in the Small Isles, a horn-shaped haven. The fertile soil and its diversity of habitats mean that the island has an incredibly rich plant life with 248 native flowering plants recorded. We will see Canna House and wander

across grassy basalt plateaus to the 600 foot cliffs on the north shore. Sail over lunch to the lovely Loch Scavaig. Just beyond is the freshwater Loch Corruisk with its breathtakingly beautiful view over the Cuillins. This is great walking country, but for those who prefer a less energetic afternoon our Zodiacs will explore the coast looking out for seals.

Day 3 Shiant Islands & Inverewe.

After breakfast we will board the Zodiacs for a cruise around the spectacular basalt cliffs of the Shiant Islands, a group of little islands located a few miles off the shores of Lewis. This is an excellent place to spot puffins, razorbills, guillemots, seals and hopefully white-tailed eagles. In the afternoon we will visit one of Scotland's premier gardens, Inverewe. This botanical garden in the northwest Highlands presents an amazing collection of exotic trees and shrubs that are sheltered by well-positioned windbreaks of native pine. After a guided tour of the gardens, we will return to the MS Hebridean Sky and sail

to Stornoway where we moor overnight.

Day 4 Isle of Lewis & Handa.

On leaving the island capital of Stornoway, we will head across the island of Lewis to the beautiful west coast. Described as Scotland's Stonehenge, the Callanish Standing Stones date from around 3000 BC. There are a total of 32 stones in a circular and avenue design. The stones stand like a petrified forest on the flat top of a peninsula which reaches out into East Loch Roag. We also visit the Dun Carloway Pictish Broch, probably built sometime in the last century BC, it would have served as an occasionally defensible residence for an extended family complete with accommodation for animals at ground floor level. Our final stop is the Gearrannan Blackhouse Village, a reconstructed settlement of traditional black houses which were made using dry stone masonry and have thatched roofs, distinctively weighted down with rocks. Visit the small museum, enjoy a display of a typical crofting activity such as weaving and take in the views of this dramatic site on the wild Atlantic coast. At Handa will use our Zodiacs to explore the magnificent sea cliffs of Torridonian sandstone which rise from the Atlantic. The island comes alive each summer when nearly 100,000 seabirds gather to breed including internationally important numbers of guillemot, razorbill, puffins and great skua.

Day 5 St Kilda & Stac Lee.

Arrive over breakfast at St Kilda, a remarkable uninhabited archipelago some fifty miles beyond the Outer Hebrides. Dominated by the highest cliffs and sea stacks in Britain, Hirta, St Kilda's main island was occupied on and off for at least two thousand years, with the last 36 Gaelic speaking inhabitants evacuated at their own request in 1930. Immediately after the evacuation, the island was bought by the Marquess of Bute to protect the island's thousands of seabirds including puffin and fulmars, and in 1957 it was bequeathed to The National Trust for Scotland. St Kilda is one of only a few UNESCO World Heritage Sites with dual status reflecting its natural and cultural significance. The local ranger will join us on board before our expedition staff lead a number of guided walks on the island. This afternoon we will cruise past two of the largest gannetries in the world at Stac Lee and Stac an Armin. These impressive stacs rise 170 metres from the sea and are home to up to 60,000 breeding pairs of northern gannet.

Day 6 Staffa & Lunga. Awake this morning at Staffa, the south side where the perpendicular rock face features an imposing series of black basalt columns, known as the Colonnade, which has been cut by the sea into cathedral-like caverns, most notably Fingal's Cave. Weather permitting, we will use our Zodiacs to explore closer.



Canna



We continue to the Treshnish Isles, an archipelago of uninhabited volcanic islets. The island of Lunga is the largest of the Treshnish Isles in Argyll and Bute. Of volcanic origin, Lunga has been described as 'a green jewel in a peacock sea' and is a summer nesting-place for hundreds of seabirds.

Day 7 Iona & Colonsay. Spend the morning on Iona which has been occupied for thousands of years and has been a place of pilgrimage and Christian worship for several centuries. It was to this flat, Hebridean island that St Columba fled from Ireland in 563 and established a monastery. Here his followers were responsible for the conversion of much of pagan Scotland and Northern England. No less than 62 Scottish Kings are

buried in the Abbey. Visit the Abbey or perhaps walk along the white sandy beaches or go in search of the corncrake amongst the irises. Lying between Mull and Islay, we will spend the afternoon exploring the island of Colonsay with her craggy, heather-clad hills and sparse woodland yet impressive array of plants and birdlife. Near Colonsay House, built in 1722 by Malcolm MacNeil and bought by Lord Strathcona in 1904, we will visit the attractively dilapidated woodland gardens which protect the tiny, enigmatic 8th century St Oran's Cross.

Day 8 Oban. Disembark this morning. Transfers will be provided to Glasgow International Airport and Glasgow Central Railway Station at a fixed time.



PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Deck	Suite Category	Price
Amundsen	Standard	£3895
Byrd	Superior	£4195
Mawson	Premium	£4395
Mawson	Corner	£4695
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£5295
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£5695
Shackleton	Hebridean	£6195
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£4895
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£5195

PRICE INCLUDES: Seven nights aboard the MS Hebridean Sky on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner • Shore excursions • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Gratuities • Transfers • Port taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance.

MS HEBRIDEAN SKY



Alfresco Dining



Owner's Balcony Suite



The Restaurant

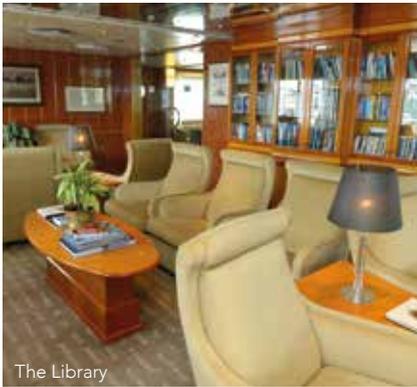
The MS Hebridean Sky is one of our three flag ships and sister vessel to the MS Island Sky and MS Caledonian Sky. All three vessels were built in the same ship yard in Italy at similar times and share the same excellent attributes that make them three of the finest small ships in the world. With a maximum passenger capacity of only 118, a vessel of her size is capable of carrying many more but instead the MS Hebridean Sky has the benefit of unusually large suites, luxuriously appointed public areas and spacious outside decks.

Your Suite

On board there are 59 exceptionally spacious and well-designed suites. All feature a sitting area and some have private balconies. The feeling of luxury is enhanced by the wood panelling and brass, which predominates throughout the vessel conveying the atmosphere of a private yacht. The passenger accommodation is arranged over five decks and all suites have outside views with those on the Scott and Shackleton Decks featuring private balconies. Each suite affords considerable comfort with en-suite bathroom featuring vanity unit with sink and walk-in shower, large wardrobes, dressing table with large mirror and stool and excellent storage. There is a mini-fridge, flat screen television and a telephone in each suite. Refillable water bottles, towelling dressing gowns and slippers are also provided for your comfort. Other facilities include a programmable electronic safe, hairdryer, assorted Molton Brown toiletries and individually controlled air-conditioning and heating. Soft hues and blended tones enhance the traditional maritime style making the passenger accommodation an inviting and relaxing place to be.

Your Dining

With only one sitting and a maximum of just over 100 passengers, the cuisine on board the MS Hebridean Sky is of a consistent superior quality that befits such a vessel. In keeping with the informal atmosphere on board, when dining you are able to choose your seating arrangements and choice of restaurants at your leisure; whether that be joining a table of four to six other passengers in the elegant à la carte Restaurant or, outside buffet-style on the Lido Deck in the evening sunshine. In the main Restaurant, breakfast is served buffet-style, with certain items cooked to order on request. Lunch and dinner menus offer plenty of choice, often reflecting the daily catch and local delicacies. The Welcome and Farewell dinners are a sumptuous five course affair. To enhance your dining experience further a selection of wines is included with both meals. Afternoon tea and pre-dinner canapés take place in either the comfort of the Lounge or out on the Lido Deck when the weather is favourable. Tea and coffee are also available 24 hours a day. Special diets can be catered for with sufficient notice.



The Library



Superior Suite



The Club

Your Space

The spacious and finely decorated public rooms include a large Lounge on the Byrd Deck featuring a selection of seating options from individual armchairs and sofas to side cushioned benches. Daily briefings given by the Cruise Director and talks from Guest Speakers and expedition staff take place in the Lounge. In addition to the main Lounge, there is also The Club, located on the Mawson Deck which features the main bar. The Club also features a 24-hour tea and coffee station. Towards the aft of the ship on the Mawson Deck is the Library. Well stocked with reference books pertaining to the destinations the vessel is visiting and a selection of essential reads, you will not find yourself short of excellent literature on board. A collection of games and devices to access the internet via the ship's satellite can also be found in the library. Access to the ship's satellite Wi-Fi via your own device is complimentary on board (*signal strength varies depending on location and demand*). The main Restaurant, which can seat all guests at one sitting, is located on the Amundsen Deck, and outside there is a rear Lido Deck located on the Scott Deck where meals are served in warm weather under shade. Further to this on the top Shackleton Deck there is an observation area, complete with sun loungers for sunbathing, relaxing with a book or catching up with fellow travellers. The Promenade Deck wraps around the whole ship providing outstanding views. There is also a small beauty salon on board with appointments made on request.

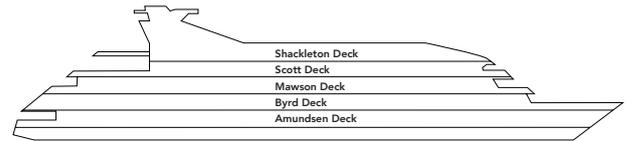
Your Comfort

The MS Hebridean Sky is equipped with the latest safety, navigation and communications equipment along with roll stabilisers to minimise the ship's motion. During your voyage we hope to offer you the opportunity to visit the Captain and Officers on the Bridge to check the vessel's progress by charts and learn more about your journey. On board you will also find a clinic and Doctor and a lift that serves all decks. When at anchor our nimble Zodiacs will ferry you ashore or, on select cruises, enjoy Zodiac cruises getting you closer to the natural world.

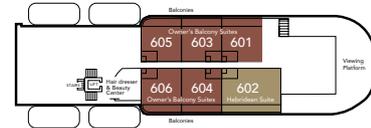
Your Life On Board

The atmosphere on board is warm and convivial and more akin to a private yacht or country hotel in which you can learn more about the wonderful destinations you are visiting in the company of like-minded people. There is a high ratio of crew to passengers and our friendly crew of 75 are mainly Filipino and Eastern European and our Captains are experienced mariners. After a day ashore you will return to the comfort and peace of a well-run and exceedingly comfortable ship where peace, high quality of service and attention to detail are the order of the day. A little music in the Lounge or bar after dinner, Guest Speakers and informative port briefings and of course good food, all contribute to make any voyage aboard this wonderful vessel a memorable and joyful experience.

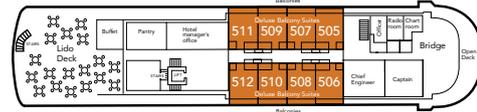
MS HEBRIDEAN SKY DECK PLAN



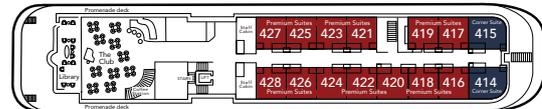
Shackleton Deck



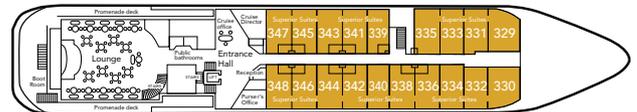
Scott Deck



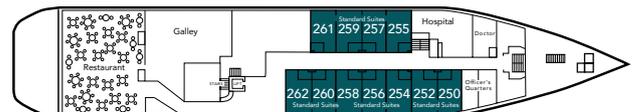
Mawson Deck



Byrd Deck



Amundsen Deck



- Standard Suites
- Corner Suites
- Owner's Balcony Suites
- Superior Suites
- Deluxe Balcony Suites
- Hebridean Suite
- Premium Suites

Please note that beds in each suite can be configured as double or twin with the exception of suites 601 and 602 which feature a fixed double bed.



During this voyage you will be visiting out of the way destinations and will be accompanied by an expedition team. Landings and excursions will be made by Zodiac landing craft. This cruise will appeal to the more adventurous and those who enjoy the natural world.



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